



COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS

ACADEMIC PREPARATION • ACCESSIBILITY • ASPIRATION

Noble Local Schools

College- and Career-Readiness Strategic Plan

Situation Analysis

All students deserve access to a high-quality education that maximizes their potential for future success. Responding to this and other challenges, **Noble Local Schools** has joined forces with Battelle for Kids (BFK) and 20 other Appalachian Ohio school districts to form the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative (OAC), and create and implement a comprehensive approach to transform rural education and improve student outcomes. At the conclusion of this multi-year initiative, the ultimate goal is to implement a successful rural education improvement collaborative that can be scaled across rural Ohio and the country.

The mission of the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative is to strengthen and leverage educator effectiveness to accelerate college- and career-readiness (CCR) for every student and ensure they have access to future opportunities to enhance their quality of life.

All school districts, regardless of geography or demographics, are faced with the need to adapt the way education is designed and delivered to meet the needs of a rapidly-changing global economy. At the same time, there are unique challenges facing rural communities and school districts. Information highlighting educational opportunities and attainment for the Appalachian Ohio region underscores the need for transformational reform to prepare students with the knowledge and skills to be future-ready upon high school graduation. Such information includes:

Educational attainment: According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (2010), Ohio's Appalachian region has historically lower college-going, college completion, and educational attainment rates than the rest of the state and the nation. Less than 12 percent of the adult population in most Ohio Appalachian counties has completed college, which is well below the overall national Appalachian rate of 17.6 percent and the U.S. rate of 24.4 percent.



Ohio Appalachian Collaborative

Accelerating College/Career-Readiness

Access to rigorous curriculum: The average percentage of high school graduates in Appalachian Ohio participating in the 2008-09 Advanced Placement (AP) test was 16 percent, compared to 34 percent for non-Appalachian Ohio. Five of the 21 districts in the OAC report that no 2009 graduating seniors participated in an AP exam (Battelle for Kids, 2011).

College-going and readiness rates: According to five-year trend data from the Ohio Board of Regents (2003-2007):

- College remediation rates for reading or mathematics on average were approximately 46 percent for Appalachian Ohio districts, compared to the state average of 39 percent.
- Fifty-nine percent of Appalachian Ohio students are exposed to a less-than-minimum college preparatory curriculum, compared to a state average of 48 percent.
- The average college entrance rate for OAC districts is nearly 40 percent, compared to the state average of 45 percent.
- ACT profiles of graduating seniors show the average (by district) percentage of graduates participating in 2008-09 ACT college entrance exams in Appalachian Ohio was 56.7 percent, compared to 63.7 percent in non-Appalachian Ohio districts.
- The mean ACT score (2008-2009) for Appalachian Ohio districts was 20.6, and for non-Appalachian Ohio districts was 21.6.

Based upon the most current labor market information from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (November 2011), eight of 11 OAC counties have unemployment rates exceeding Ohio's statewide unemployment rate of 8.5 percent. Additionally, five OAC counties have unemployment rates above 10 percent. All OAC counties have per capita personal income levels below the state and national levels (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2011b).

On the job front: In 2011, the state of Ohio published the "Buckeye Top 50: 2008-2018: Ohio's High-Wage Occupations in Demand." This list of the 50 high-wage occupations in Ohio that are in demand, and projected to stay in demand, includes the educational requirements for each job. Sixty percent of the top 50 jobs required a postsecondary vocational award or better. Thirty-nine require an associate's degree or better (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2011a).

Brain drain: While rural schools can be a source of unity in many communities, there is also a distinct tension between schools and the Appalachian community because of a phenomenon known as "brain drain." Schools often inadvertently feed the brain drain of rural areas, as many talented rural students leave their respective Appalachian communities in search of better opportunities. This can lead to hostility and even a class distinction within these rural areas. As Courrege (2011) notes, those at one end of this hierarchy feel "a sense of alienation from and hostility toward schools, while those on the other end see education as the only path to success."

Focus on 9-14 education: In his book, *College and Career Ready in the 21st Century: Making High School Matter*, Stone (2012) notes that more than half of ninth-grade students in the United States will never complete a college degree. Thus, schools as well as state and federal policymakers are discussing the need for high schools to do more than just prepare some students for college. Schools must prepare all American

youth for productive lives as well as continued learning beyond high school. Therefore, schools are asked now to shift the focus of high school reform efforts from “college for all” to “careers for all.” This includes developing a framework for career and technical education, stemming dropout rates, and making the transition to higher education institutions more seamless. The framework for high school education has become a 9-14 framework and not simply a 9-12 framework, with a specific eye to helping students transition to postsecondary lives.

College education costs and payoff: According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, America’s higher education system enterprise has become a \$375 billion industry (Blumenstyk, 2008). The higher education industry and college affordability is becoming a greater issue with regard to national policy and legislation. In fact, a poll conducted by the National Education Association showed that 70 percent of parents and 65 percent of students said making college affordable was an important issue for them during election time. Therefore, with the rising costs of college, the question looming large in the Appalachian community is, “what is the payoff?” Parents, students, and communities must weigh the cost (and subsequent debt) of college versus the potential for lifetime earnings that comes with attending college. While the National Center for Education Statistics notes that the average lifetime earnings of a college graduate is \$1 million more than those without a degree, prospective students cannot ignore the question of short-term affordability and debt. This question can create a barrier to students attending both 2-year and 4-year institutions.

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A Research Definition of College- and Career-Readiness

In order to fully understand such challenges and needs, the OAC must focus on defining an overall vision of college- and career-readiness. In *Something in Common*, a book that outlines the in-depth development of the Common Core State Standards, Robert Rothman defines college- and career-readiness as “the ability to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs...For college, that meant enrolling in either a two-year or four-year institution; for workforce training, that meant enrolling in programs that prepare students for careers that offer competitive, livable salaries, that offer opportunities for career advancement, and that are in growing or sustainable industry” (Rothman, 2011, p. 80).

For the purposes of this initiative, the OAC will frame its definition of college- and career-readiness as outlined by Rothman. Further, the OAC will build upon this definition by defining the Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness.

Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness

There is significant research dedicated to college- and career- readiness. For the purposes of the OAC, we have organized our review of college- and career-readiness under three pillars to provide a framework for further review and development in district-based initiatives. These pillars include:

Academic Preparation • Accessibility • Aspiration

Academic Preparation: identifies the academic knowledge and preparation students need for success in college and careers. This involves a rigorous PreK-12 curriculum that incorporates college- and career-readiness opportunities in academic offerings.

Accessibility: includes many logistical aspects around college- and career-readiness, which include preparation, financial considerations, and degree/career attainment. Even if students are academically prepared, they also must know how to access educational and career opportunities beyond high school.

Aspiration: addresses how postsecondary education and workforce training opportunities are presented to students to ensure they are making appropriate and informed choices for opportunities beyond high school.

(the Research Definition of College- and Career-Readiness and Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness above reprinted with permission from the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative College- and Career-Readiness Strategic Plan, ©2012, Battelle for Kids)

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Pillar 1:

Academic Preparation

This pillar seeks to identify the key components of academic preparation for college- and career-readiness. The Common Core State Standards initiative and research regarding the gap in student preparation for postsecondary success fit in the discussion around this pillar. **Key questions to answer around this pillar include:**

- How are districts promoting alignment and transition to the Common Core State Standards?
- What other K-12 academic and curriculum components should be included with regard to academic preparation for college- and career-readiness (i.e., STEMM [science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine], math, science, service-learning, internships, entrepreneurship, etc.)?

Academic Preparation: identifies the academic knowledge and preparation students need for success in college and careers. This involves a rigorous PreK-12 curriculum that incorporates college- and career-readiness opportunities in academic offerings.

Outcome Data for Pillar 1

- The high school is utilizing Advisor/Advisee, AA, groups to expose every student to a variety of postsecondary options.
- K-8 will be having a school-wide career day, "What Drives You."

Strategy 1

Offer rigorous PreK-12 curriculum that involves college- and career-readiness opportunities, along with academic requirements, to meet student goals.

1.3 Connect with community resources to being to examine job trends and needs in the community, as well as resources to accomplish this tactic.

Actions to Close Gap:

1. High school will increase involvement by utilizing Advisor/Advisee, AA, groups to increase community involvement and career awareness.
2. Middle school will utilize specific classes to increase job awareness, work on job applications, and complete a job fair.
3. Elementary school will use grade level teams to expose students to jobs and career clusters.

Pillar 2:

Accessibility

In an increasingly competitive global economy, yet struggling economic climate, access to viable college and career choices for students is crucial. **Key questions around this pillar include:**

- How do we increase awareness and culture of college and career access from grades K-12?
- What are the barriers to college and career access for all students? How do we eliminate such barriers?

Strategy 2

Leverage community assets to help students and families access college and career preparation programs.

2.1 Increase the availability of dual enrollment courses for Noble Local students.

2.1.1 Teacher questionnaire: ask teachers about credentials and future plans, would they be willing to teach a dual enrollment course.

2.1.2 Student survey: find out what dual enrollment interests students have, what courses do we need to focus on offering.

2.2 Increase our involvement in the OAC and our community's involvement in College- and Career-Readiness decisions.

2.2.1 Develop a Community College- and Career-Readiness Team utilizing a community involvement team already in place.

2.2.2 Explore dual enrollment opportunities that are available to us through our participation in the OAC.

Accessibility: includes many logistical aspects around college- and career-readiness, which include preparation, financial considerations, and degree/career attainment. Even if students are academically prepared, they also must know how to access educational and career opportunities beyond high school.

Outcome Data for Pillar 2

- Shenandoah High School will be offering dual enrollment courses in the fall of 2013.

Pillar 3:

Aspiration

The topic of college and career aspiration often surfaces when discussing rural or Appalachian schools. The issues include addressing the challenges of “brain drain” and leaping economic hurdles, as well as, changing long-standing community cultures with regard to college attendance and perception. **Key questions around this pillar include:**

Aspiration: addresses how postsecondary education and workforce training opportunities are presented to students to ensure they are making appropriate and informed choices for opportunities beyond high school.

- What are the barriers to students’ college and career aspirations?
- What resources are available to increase student awareness of postsecondary options?
- Self-efficacy and self-esteem are also variables linked to college attendance. How do we build such efficacy in students in the K-12 setting so that they develop appropriate college and career aspirations?

Strategy 3

Facilitate the development of students’ realistic visions for their futures.

3.1 Noble Local needs to create a culture that promotes and emphasizes the fact that students can succeed and postsecondary education is critical and attainable.

- 3.1.1 K-4 will be placing more of a focus on Aspiration. We need to embed the Aspiration of postsecondary options early in a student’s education, by exposing students to more options.
- 3.1.2 Teachers in our Middle School will be helping students develop a plan, so students will have a concrete plan, pertaining to their postsecondary options, from which to work.
- 3.1.3 There will be a concerted effort at the High School level to get students college credit so they will Aspire to continue on the postsecondary plan they have in place.
- 3.1.4 Steps 3.1.1 through 3.1.3 will require a need to revamp and revise our current curriculum to incorporate more college/career education.

3.2 Connect with alumni and other stakeholders from the school/region to develop relationships, share success stories, and brainstorm ideas to help Noble Local students be successful in their postsecondary options.

- 3.2.1 Form an new Alumni/Stakeholder Advisory Board to meet this charge.
- 3.2.2 Utilize the Alumni/Stakeholder Advisory Board to identify postsecondary challenges and develop ideas to alleviate these challenges.

3.3 Offer courses in our District for students to develop postsecondary readiness

- 3.3.1 Steps 3.1.1 through 3.1.3 will require a need to revamp and revise our current curriculum to incorporate more college/career education at all levels.
- 3.3.2 Explore scheduling and dual enrollment options that will afford more opportunities for students to gain college credit while staying on Noble Local’s campus.

Appendix A: Works Cited

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